

# Work from the Experimental Television Center

## Catalog Introduction David Ross 1972

### Daily Performance Schedule

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\*\*The artist is not ahead of his time, he is in it. The consumer is living in the past. Video breaks down that gap.

-Mike Goldberg, Intermedia, Vancouver

The development of a popular art-oriented television system as a technically viable and universally accessible process, is the object of an increasing number of artists. This comes as a result of the generally acknowledged breakdown of the barriers built during the past three decades by an essentially one-way, solitary input information network; the effect of which has been to isolate the receiver, rendering him anonymous, powerless to effect the process and ironically, complacent as a direct result of it.

With the promulgation of the new aesthetics based on utilizations of the insights of Fuller, Weiner, McLuhan, Dechert and others. The artist along with the viewer in general is coming to regard both the public and commercial television structure as incapable of producing little more than a nascent information olio, ideologically split and essentially closed. The public broadcasting avant - garde offers a kind of "culture enrichment," though more often than not it denies both the appearance and growth of new indigenous talents, while the long abandoned commercial networks continue to fill the air with "vuzac." This term, defined by composer and video artist Nam June Paik during a recent symposium on video arts, refers to the subliminal, sedative qualities of most television programming. It is the vuzac quality, for instance, that makes it possible for one to make an abrupt switch from a televised body count to an "I Love Lucy" re-run without losing a train of thought. In cybernetic terminology, the medium as a whole suffers from misconceptions of sensitivity and stability which affects decisions relating to both system access and input.

For twenty-five years, the televiewer has been conditioned (as have most consumers) to accept a passive receptor status. In all but the most enlightened situations, television programming is controlled by a stability seeking cybernetic corporate structure. For a variety of seemingly sound economic and technical reasons, e.g., high production costs, prohibitive capital expenditures, a limited range of frequency assignments, etc., upstream access and significant input has been denied. Most astounding has been the lack of concerted popular pressure to change the system. Analogously, the viewer is taught to read television, but at the same time he is systematically denied access to pen and paper. Two questions help to underscore this situation. First, how can the apparent imbalance between television information input facilities of our consumption oriented society be brought into line with an almost nonexistent popular output? Second, what means will be used to change the information structure to better reflect the open-ended nature of our culture as a whole?

This exhibition of videotapes and related works by the Experimental Television Center of Binghamton, New York represents in its totality, an answer to these questions.

Ralph Hocking, along with Ken Dominick, Sherry Miller and Robert Diamond formed the Experimental Television Center (ETC) in July 1971. Their intent, to paraphrase Hocking, is to bring together artists, educators, and the community in general our open-ended community television production center and

workshop. Using low cost portable video equipment (including early "hand-rewind" SONY portapaks) ETC has turned on hundreds of people within the Binghamton community to the fact that they can make their "own" television, and that none of the established forms need be employed.

"Response was slow at first," noted Dominick, "people had trouble getting beyond the 'toy' stage of video use." After several months, their free approach led to a series of interactions with the form not found in most traditionally oriented media centers.

Nam June Paik and Shuya Abe built a video synthesizer and chroma keyer in Binghamton, but unlike the synthesizers built for relatively restrictive TV studios, the ETC synthesizer is available to artists from all over as well as those interested within the greater Binghamton community. To my knowledge, this is a situation without comparison anywhere in the country.

For a great deal of the uninitiated public, much of the TV work turned out of non-corporate situations may prove unreadable. This paradigm, associated with receptor boredom and rejection, will wane, I believe, as people become more selective in what they watch, accustomed to limited audience programming, and begin to regard the emergence of the artist in a system that has previously kept Jack Webb in residuals and re-runs and untold genius in poverty and obscurity.

Once the people realize that the right to produce television need not develop out of a major marketing scheme, a true respect for the value and power of the medium will develop. The people will use the television technology as a humanizing element for getting closer "to" each other and talking "to" each other.

A well-developed cable television system provides the potential for applying these methods to the community. A system that values everyone as both consumer and producer can be built in cities like Syracuse.

The television work in this exhibition along with the specific performances and constructions, give us an idea of the information that at present is not translated from producer to viewer without some kind of display context. The work (structurally sound but still crude by a broadcast technician's standards) is rich in content. This break from the technical restrictions of broadcast television, brought about in effect by the development of 1/2" video hardware and software, is in reality freeing the form. This new free form medium can accept both new information and develop a structure to support it.

Foreseeable is an information network with room for both the artist and the poet, the powerless and the invisible, as well as "Let's Make a Dealers," and "Lucy Lovers." The promise of inexpensive video cameras and video taping relates this work to the very specific communications problems of any city. Although no center like ETC exists in Syracuse, some visible structures such as the Syracuse Cable Coalition, the Consumer Protection Bureau, University Union and the Coalition for Quality Broadcasting, are developing. Facilities open for the community exist in general form at the Everson and at the University. The cultural, educational, governmental, political and service institutions, however, share responsibility with the people of the community towards the development of this vital community resource.

Video art is an important component and the result of alternate access and input. The true significance lies in the re-establishment of a natural context in which to view the change.

Catalog Introduction. Work from the Experimental Television Center. September 19 – October 2, 1972. Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse.

## DAILY PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

Schedule of events and constructions (all in Gallery B unless otherwise noted)

### TV Bed Performance by Charlotte Moorman

1:00 and 3:00 on September 19 and 20

This piece is a collaborative work by Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller, Nam June Paik and Charlotte Moorman. A bed will be constructed out of ten video monitors. They will play pre-recorded tapes and off-the-air network broadcast material. Reclining upon that bed, Miss Moorman will perform a concert on the TV cello.

### Video Construction by Ken Dominick

All day September 26, 27 and 28

An assembled grouping of nine large video monitors, each connected to a separate vtr deck, will playback pre-recorded tapes of objects and spaces within the museum itself. When viewed as a total form, the montage of images will form an electric mosaic object reconstruction. The space within the dismembered object represents an introduction of the physical form (the monitor) contrasting it with the electrical reconstruction of space that video tape provides.

### Three Channel Video Performance by Shigeko Kubota

1: 00 and 3: 00 on September 30

Three separate monitors and playback systems will display the *Marcel Duchamp - John Cage Chess Match* and *Europe on a Tape a Day*, with slight time variations. Sound Track by John Cage.

### Minimal Piano Performance by Nam June Paik

11:59 p.m. on September 30 in auditorium

The composer, video artist and avant garde musician will perform a rare piano performance. Included in the midnight program will be work by Hennig Christiansen and others.

### Jazz Concert/Video Synthesis Chroma Key Interface by Qpen Channels

2:00 p.m. on October 1 in auditorium

Don Tipton, Bill Sharon and Mark Nash, three Boston musicians, will perform in concert in conjunction with Paik-Abe Video Synthesizer and Chroma Key Switcher.

All performances are free and open to the public!